CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION

CONVEYING THE STUDENT'S ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE: ENGAGING LOCAL SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS TO MEET PARENTS' NEED FOR INFORMATION

BRIEF TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORT

MARCH 2008

Québec

Conveying The Student's Acquired Knowledge: Engaging Local School Stakeholders To Meet Parents' Need For Information

Brief to the minister of Education, Recreation and Sport

March 2008

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INTRODUCTION

In June of 2007, the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport submitted a request for a brief to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation as follows:

> "[...] In response to concerns expressed by some about the competency-based approach and the level of knowledge acquired by students, I respectfully request that the Conseil submit a second brief on the methods of conveying the acquisition of knowledge by the student on report cards and in competency reports."[1]

The first brief to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport, *The Draft Regulation Amending the Basic School Regulation for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education* (CSE 2007a), was released in August of 2007. It addressed the expression of competencies in ordinary terms on report cards, student's results in percentages and the inclusion of the group average in report cards, as well as the possibility of extending a cycle even during a given cycle of instruction. The Conseil invites its readers to learn more about the recommendations it formulated in that brief.

While the objective of the present Brief differs from the first, the Conseil believes that the context of the request as well as its overall framework for analysis remain unchanged. The Conseil thus based its study for the present Brief on the same principles:

- The value of clear, accurate and relevant information conveyed to parents;
- The cohesiveness of the orientations of the education reform and the objectives of the Québec Education Program;
- The feasibility of the proposed changes and the means of supporting them (CSE 2007a).

The present request by the Minister seems to indicate that doubts persist regarding the role of knowledge in the Québec Education Program (QEP), a program founded on a competency-based approach. Some are also questioning the goals of such a curriculum and its level of requirements for the acquisition of knowledge. While the Conseil acknowledges these concerns and has taken them into account in the preparation of the present Brief, it maintains that regulatory mechanisms are in place and were specifically designed for monitoring the QEP and its implementation.[2]

The Conseil would also like to note that the question of the report card has always generated considerable debate and the issue of whether the current model accurately reflects student achievement and best communicates student results to parents is a long-standing one. (Lussier, 2001). The implementation of the curriculum has led teachers to develop new pedagogical practices, both in the areas of teaching and evaluation. Consequently, the report card and the competency

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1 Letter from the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport [translation]. *See* Appendix 1.

2 The Table de pilotage du Renouveau pédagogique, the Comité-conseil sur les programmes d'études and a research project by Professor Simon Larose of Université Laval [*Évaluation de l'impact du programme de formation de l'école québécoise sur l'engagement, les connaissances disciplinaires, les compétences transversales et la réussite scolaire des élèves du secondaire*].

report[3] must now express student learning in a different way. This change constitutes a great departure for teachers and parents alike. Indeed, a report recently released in France revealed that the communication of student results is often a sensitive issue, particularly in countries that have adopted a competency-based curriculum (Houchot *et al.* 2007). As parents are key partners in the education of their children, it follows that the issue of communicating student results and the nature of parents' need for information should be the object of particular focus.

The present Brief is divided into six chapters. In Chapter 1, the Conseil will briefly outline the analytical framework used for its study in preparing the brief. Chapter 2 will review the milestones that laid the groundwork for the QEP, in order to provide an historical context to the Program. In Chapter 3, the Conseil will examine, from various perspectives, the role of knowledge and its evaluation within the framework of a competency-based approach. Chapter 4 will address the issue of communicating the evaluation of student results to parents. Lastly, the Conseil will present its approaches and recommendations in Chapters 5 and 6, first on the methods of conveying results of the knowledge acquired by the student, and then more generally on establishing favourable conditions that support the communication of these results to parents.

3 The report card and competency report are two different tools. A report card periodically expresses the results obtained by students at different times in a cycle of instruction, and is thus a useful learning aid, as it reveals student achievement during the cycle. A competency report is the final communication parents receive at the end of a given cycle, and must indicate the level of competency development achieved by the student as per the requirements established in the QEP (MEQ 2003).

Chapter 1 Analytical Framework and Studies Conducted For the Present Brief

1.1 Analytical Framework For the Minister's Request

The Conseil interprets the Minister's request for a second brief as an expression of her will to meet the need of parents to understand the achievement and progress of their child in order to support them. The Minister's request concerns more *the method* rather than *the relevance* of conveying information on the knowledge acquired by the student.

The Minister's request does not entail any changes to be made to existing regulatory or normative framework. Indeed, in her letter, the Minister does not mention any amendments to regulations, the Québec Education Program (QEP), or any policy currently in effect. The request may, however, entail a new addition to report cards and competency reports: the inclusion of knowledge acquired by the student. Indeed, in a letter addressed to school personnel dated November 2, 2007,[4] the Minister reaffirmed her intention to stay the course of education reform.

To prepare the present Brief, the Conseil directed its study solely on the request in the Minister's letter and will therefore not address the education reform, the QEP, or the calendar for its implementation. The Conseil acknowledges the regulatory and normative frameworks in place[5] and the Minister's intention of continuing the education reform's path, particularly the QEP's calendar for implementation.[6]

1.2 Studies Conducted By the Conseil

The Conseil's briefs are always supported by a variety of research, studies and consultation on a given issue. The present Brief, despite its tight deadline, is no exception.

Review of Research Literature and Examination Of Outside Experiments

The Conseil conducted a review of research literature and examined several specialized articles on the issue of the development and the evaluation of competencies.

Experiments outside of Québec—in England, Ontario, and the French Community of Belgium—were also examined. The choice of these experiments was dictated by a need for comparison. For an outside experiment to be applicable to Québec, the characteristics of the systems studied must have sufficient similarities, notably in the structure of the curriculum. England, Ontario and the French

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4 See Appendix 2.

5 The *Education Act*; *Regulation respecting the basis of elementary school and preschool organization*; Québec Education Program; *Policy For the Evaluation Of Learning*; and frameworks for the evaluation of learning (for elementary and secondary schools).

6 The calendar for the implementation of the QEP is available online at www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/dp/programme_de_formation/calendrier/calendar.pdf.

Community of Belgium have all adopted curricula predicated on a competency-based approach. The Conseil understands that each of these realities has its own peculiarities, therefore in some respects these systems are all very different. Consequently, no outside experiment can be perfectly matched with the reality of Québec. For this reason, the Conseil deemed them useful and a source of inspiration for its study, rather than model experiments.

Consultations With Academic Experts

The Conseil consulted three academics whose field of expertise lies in, the ongoing harmonization, modification and adoption of the QEP by teachers:

- Philippe Jonnaert, Director, *Observatoire des réformes en éducation* and Mathematics professor at Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM), whose research on education reform extends beyond Québec's borders.
- Louise Lafortune, Professor, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR) and leader of the MELS-UQTR joint project *Recherche-formation-accompagnement pour l'actualisation du Programme de formation de l'école québécoise*.
- Marc Turgeon, Dean, Faculty of Education at UQAM and member of the *Table de pilotage du renouveau pédagogique*.

The Conseil would like to thank Mr. Jonnaert, Ms. Lafortune and Mr. Turgeon for having graciously accepted to contribute to the broadening of the Conseil's study.

Consultations With Teachers

The Conseil also met with 35 Elementary and Secondary Cycle I teachers.[7] Secondary Cycle II teachers were not consulted as, at that time, the QEP had yet to or had just recently come into effect.[8] The purpose of these consultations was for the Conseil to understand how teachers incorporated knowledge at each stage of their teaching practices—in their lesson planning, in carrying out learning activities, in the evaluation and in communicating the results to parents. In order to be consistent with the QEP, the Conseil consulted teachers who have adopted the curriculum and whose practices are consequently aligned with its approach of developing competencies. The overall objective of these consultations was to observe how teachers took into account acquired knowledge within the scope of competency development in the QEP; the Conseil then sought to define a range of these teaching practices.

The insight provided by these consultations has enabled the Conseil to formulate practical recommendations based on existing practices, recommendations which would allow teachers to continue harmonizing the adoption process of the QEP.

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7 For more details, see Appendix 3.

8 The program for Secondary III was implemented in secondary schools as of September 2007. The calendar for the implementation of the QEP is available online at www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/dp/programme_de_formation/calendrier/calendar.pdf.

While the Conseil does not claim to have conducted an extensive survey on the issue, these findings have nonetheless revealed a range of existing practices and have allowed the Conseil to better understand how knowledge and competencies can best be expressed.

The Conseil would like to thank the teachers for generously sharing their experiences, as well as all school administrators and partners who made these consultations possible.

Consultation With the Governing Bodies of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation

In addition to the seven Committee members mandated with its preparation, the Conseil also submitted the present Brief to the Commission on Preschool and Elementary Education and to the Commission on Secondary Education for their advice. These two commissions, each comprising 15 members from the education community and parents, were able to provide comment on the approaches and positions of the Conseil, and in doing so, have further enriched the Brief with their expertise.

Chapter 2 The Québec Education Program: A Response To A Society-wide Debate On Education

To provide a context for further examination of the issue, a brief overview of the milestones leading to the establishment of the Québec Education Program (QEP) appears necessary, notably to recall that this education program was the result of a society-wide debate.

What follows in Section 2.1 is not an examination of the relevance of competency-based curricula nor of the content of the QEP itself. In taking a chronological view of events and in recalling some of the debates that have guided the choice of a competency-based approach as the foundation for the QEP, the Conseil simply wishes to revisit the path that led to the establishment of the current curriculum and the work of many of Québec's education stakeholders and citizens.

2.1 Milestones Leading to the Québec Education Program: A Chronological Overview

It was in 1993, with the release of *Faire avancer l'école* (MEQ, 1993) by the Ministère de l'éducation, that a debate first began to emerge on the need to rethink the curriculum for elementary and secondary levels. "A task force was mandated soon thereafter by the Minister of Education to define the 'learning profile' of students at the end of their elementary and at the end of their secondary education, in other words, the overall integrated learning, skills and aptitudes that a student must have achieved at the end of the two basic education stages." (Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles 1994, p.43).

Shortly after the release of *Preparing Our Youth For the 21st Century* (also known as the Corbo Report) by the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles in June of 1994, the Conseil released a brief on the importance of a curricular reform for elementary and secondary schools (CSE 1994). In its brief, the Conseil called for a thorough rethinking of then-current issues in elementary and secondary school curricula and proposed concrete recommendations for a broader education program that would better meet the needs of today's society, recommendations such as using exit profiles as tools in a reformed curriculum. In the Conseil's opinion, these profiles would have permitted the inclusion of both the broad objectives of education and the specifics and needs of current education. Indeed, the Conseil recommended that this should be the fulcrum of an intellectual education:

> "The Conseil has already stated that it is important to realign the central axis of the mission of education: to guarantee a basic education, manifested in the acquisition of formative knowledge, which enables one to organize information, build on and adapt this knowledge, both when developing a systematic approach and acquiring transferable skills, such as reasoning, analytical thinking, and in critical thinking and problem resolution" (CSE 1994, p.20, translation).

In Spring of 1995, the Estates General On Education was held as a response to criticism of the education system at that time, and to address new emerging issues in Québec society. The Estates General thus reflected the will on the part of citizens and various other stakeholders to participate in a

debate on education and to completely overhaul the organization and priorities of the Québec education system. Prior to releasing its report on the state of Québec education in January later that year (Commission For the Estates General on Education, 1996a), the Commission held 56 days of public consultations across Québec. The Commission then released its final report in 1996, *The Estates General On Education 1995–1996, Renewing Our Education System: Ten Priority Actions* (Commission For the Estates General On Education, 1996b).

One of the priority actions as defined in this final report was the need for a redrawn blueprint of elementary and secondary curricula. Basing its approach on the "learning profiles" proposed in the Corbo Report, the Commission recommended that the curriculum be divided into six major areas of learning: Language; Technology; Science and Mathematics; Life in Society; the Arts; and Personal Development. The Commission also specified that "The skills students are expected to acquire in these various learning areas must be defined" (Commission For the Estates General On Education, 1996b, p.20). In addition, the Commission also recommended that curricular reform consider the importance of the four types of knowledge (*learning to learn, to be, to do, and to live together*). These terms were adapted from the Delors Report (The International Commission on Education For the Twenty-first Century, 1996). The Commission also emphasized the need for enhanced cultural content in the curriculum. Lastly the Commission recommended that a task force be established to propose necessary changes to the curriculum.

On February 4, 1997, the Ministère de l'Éducation released *A New Direction For Success*, its action plan on the education reform (MEQ 1997a), in which seven lines of action were defined. For the second line of action, *Teaching the Essential Subjects*, the Government announced the creation of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform. Chaired by Paul Inchauspé, this task force was mandated by the Minister to formulate recommendations for the appropriate modifications to elementary and secondary school curricula.

The Task Force on Curriculum Reform released its final report, *Reaffirming the Mission Of Our Schools*, in June of 1997. Indeed, the structure of today's curriculum has its foundations in this report. From the outset, the report defined the objectives the education reform needed to meet to fulfill the threefold mission of education—to instruct, to socialize and to provide qualifications. The Task Force also emphasized that it had considered the "learning profiles" recommended in the Corbo Report in defining the programs of study. It noted, however, that some countries opted for the creation of programs based on exit profiles or competency-based profiles that specified the types of skills that should be acquired in each subject (The Task Force on Curriculum Reform 1997). The report, however, did not specify whether or not programs for each subject should be designed in this manner, but believed it to be an interesting option. It cautioned, however, that any confusion between the "learning profiles" of the Corbo Report and "exit profiles" should be avoided.

The report then incorporated five "broad fields of learning" such as those defined in the final report of the Commission For the Estates General On Education: Languages; Technology, Science and Mathematics; Life In Society; The Arts; Personal Development. However, the report recommended that generic skills included in the core curriculum be called "cross-curricular learning" and these be distinct from broad areas of learning, as the former are skills developed across a range of subjects. Moreover, it recommended that some "fields" should from thereon be incorporated in each school's "program of programs." These have become the "broad areas of learning" of the Québec Education

Program (QEP).[9] The Task Force also recommended the establishment of a subject time-allocation to organize the broad areas of learning and promote a realignment of core subjects.

Three months following the release of the Task Force's report, the Ministère de l'Éducation also released its educational policy statement on the key areas of the reform, *Québec Schools on Course* (MEQ 1997b), from the perspective of the programs of study and their related measures. In this statement, ministerial policy was officially introduced following the recommendations of the Task Force. Thus the process of establishing the new curriculum began: subject-time allocation, amendments to the *Education Act*, establishment of the QEP, etc.

The work in establishing the QEP for preschool and elementary schools has involved the participation of many stakeholders in the education system, namely teachers and education experts in each of the programs. Each project for a program of study was examined for internal cohesiveness. Each project was in turn studied by the Comité-conseil sur les programmes d'études[10] and submitted for validation to about 20 schools selected for a feasibility study on the program's implementation.[11]

The first version of the QEP for preschool and elementary education was released in 2000. The Commission des programmes d'études (now called the Comité-conseil sur les programmes d'études) examined this first draft and issued its recommendations for Cycle I in 2000 and for Cycle II and Cycle III in 2001.

The program for Secondary Cycle I was thereafter released, and a draft version of Secondary Cycle II was first made public for consultation, followed by its final version. Implementation of the QEP became mandatory as of September 2000 for Cycle I in elementary schools (followed by Cycle II and Cycle III) and beginning in 2005 the program was implemented in Secondary I and will continue yearly until Secondary V in September 2009.[12]

This chronological review of events reveals that restructuring the curriculum of Québec's basic education has engaged many stakeholders in the education community over the past decade. The rationale behind establishing this new curriculum was to action the objectives and directions defined at the various stages of debate and consultation. Inevitably, the QEP must therefore continue: the structure of the program, its competencies, its content and organization, the level of requirements—all have been the object of much work and consideration.

2.2 The Rationale Behind A Competency-based Curriculum

Establishing competency-based curricula is not exclusive to Québec. "In general, competencies are at the heart of all current trends in education reforms" (Braslavsky 2001, OECD 2001, UNESCO

9 Health and Well-Being, Personal and Career Planning, Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, Media Literacy, Citizenship and Community Life.

10 In 1997, the Commission des programmes d'études was established and mandated to advise the Minister on issues related to programs of study. The Commission became the Comité-conseil sur les programmes d'études, yet retained its original mandate.

11 The process of developing the QEP is particularly well explained in an article by Drouin and Giguère (2001).

12 The calendar for the implementation of the Québec Education Program is available online at http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/dp/programme_de_formation/calendrier/calendar.pdf.

2004, cited in Jonnaert 2006, [translation]) and Houchot *et. al.* 2007. But what are the reasons behind this trend? Why should a curriculum be based on competencies?

In its 2003 brief *L'appropriation locale de la réforme : un défi à la mesure de l'école secondaire*, the Conseil summarized the reasons behind the decision for a competency-based approach in the establishment of the Québec Education Program (QEP).

First, an education program built on a competency-based approach would represent an appropriate response to recommendations in the report *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools* and in the educational policy statement *Québec Schools on Course*—in other words, a program realigned with essential core knowledge, which demands both higher skills from the student regarding the integration of knowledge and which prioritizes enhanced cultural content. In addition, this type of curriculum would provide teachers with sufficient manoeuvring room and allow for professional assessment concurrent with the development of a teaching staff featuring all the characteristics of true professionals.

The decision of a competency-based approach as the foundation for the QEP was also a response to criticism of the results of previous objective-based programs. For example:

- Overly-analytical approach leading to a proliferation of objectives;
- Compartmentalization of knowledge;
- Emphasis on short-term goals;
- Focus on evaluation at the expense of learning;
- Priority given to content over mental processes that enable its use;
- Development of elementary rather than higher skills;
- Lacking and not very transferable educational skills (CSE 2003).

The choice of this approach was also the direct result of a critical view of outcomes—particularly regarding the number of students having learning difficulties or who were failing—and drop-out rates.

Lastly, a competency-based approach as the foundation for the QEP was guided by the latest research in the field of education, which made it possible to gain a greater understanding of the complex dynamic relationships of teaching and learning as well student motivation and its role in educational success.

This desire to provide a more inclusive education that allows students to develop their higher skills is not new; in fact, the authors of the Parent Report voiced a similar opinion:

> "To regard the teacher as nothing more than an instructor would be to delude oneself. Whether he likes it or not, he is much more than that. He either awakens or puts young minds to sleep; he is the one who interests the child or renders him indifferent, the one who teaches the youngster to engage in dialogue or renders him unable ever to know how [...] The teaching of a real 'master' supplies knowledge for his students, but it also awakens their minds, it familiarizes them with good work methods, it sustains their interest, it renders them capable and eager to study on their own. A student who has had good teachers possesses intellectual curiosity; he knows how to interpret, analyze, synthesize, express

himself; he knows how to work" (Royal Commission Of Inquiry On Education In the Province Of Québec 1963, pp.196–197).

A curriculum predicated on a competency-based approach thus reflects an interest in current education-related issues present in Québec and elsewhere in the world. It also signals a desire for a more rigorous basic instruction. Lastly, it is a curriculum for meeting the broad objective of a timeless education that transcends the boundaries of time and space, one that ensures students not only acquire knowledge, but are also able to reinvest it in their present and future life.

2.3 A New and Demanding Curriculum and Process For Change

In the previous section, the Conseil reviewed the rationale governing the choice of a competency-based curriculum. This does not imply that the Conseil believes this program to be flawless, nor its implementation by school stakeholders free of obstacles. Establishing and adopting a new curriculum whose structure and objectives are very different from previous curricula is a great undertaking, and one that is bound to encounter obstacles and require modifications. It is precisely for this reason regulatory mechanisms were established to monitor the QEP and its implementation.[13]

The Conseil draws three main conclusions from the review in this chapter. First, the QEP was established following extensive consultation, starting with the Quebec public at large, followed by education stakeholders more directly affected by the actual implementation of the government's intentions. Second, the decision of a competency-based approach as the foundation for a curriculum is not exclusive to Québec and the arguments used in its favour reflect a concern for issues beyond education that concern society as a whole. Third, all the effort in establishing the QEP has been invested in the creation of an enhanced and more rigorous curriculum more attentive to core subjects, not simply dedicated to acquiring knowledge, but also to the development of higher competencies.

[13] *See* footnote 2.

Chapter 3 Knowledge and Its Evaluation In a Competency-based Approach

Before addressing the issue of communication to parents, the Conseil will place the role of knowledge in a competency-based approach into context by examining it from three different perspectives: research on competency development, the Québec Education Program (QEP) and pedagogical practices as defined by teachers themselves during the consultations. The Conseil will then conclude by reviewing the manner in which knowledge and competencies are expressed in the evaluation of learning.

3.1 The Role Of Knowledge In A Competency-Based Approach

It would seem appropriate to begin with definitions of "knowledge" and "competency."

In layman's terms, "knowledge" usually refers to both the content in the programs of study and the elements of that content retained by the student. According to Jonnaert (2006) a distinction must be made between "codified knowledge" and student learning. For this author, "codified knowledge" is part of the collective heritage of a community. In other words, some knowledge is generally agreed upon both in nature and value and is consequently included in curricula. The *concept* of knowledge, however, refers to the cognitive heritage of the student with regard to the codified knowledge that he has acquired and integrated. In other words, the student develops his knowledge around the codified knowledge found in the QEP, for example.

"Competency" refers to the ability of the student to use a range of resources—including his knowledge—in meaningful and complex situations. These in turn must closely reflect realistic situations so the student may eventually be able to use his competencies in a realistic context. Of course, varying definitions of the term "competency" exist, depending on the author or field of research.[14] According to Rey (2004), education scholars generally agree on a definition. In the QEP, the definition of a competency is as follows:

> "[...] a set of behaviours based on the effective mobilization and use of a range of resources. Set of behaviours refers to the capacity to use appropriately a variety of resources, both internal and external, in particular, learnings acquired in school or in everyday life. One aim of a competency-based program is to ensure that students' learnings serve as tools for both action and thought, which is a form of action" (MEQ 2001, pp.4–5).

The role of knowledge in a competency-based approach, then, refers to the manner in which one ensures that the student acquires knowledge and develops his ability to use this knowledge in situations that approximate those encountered in realistic contexts.

[14] *See* Tardif 2006, Le Boterf 2002, Perrenoud 1997, Paquay *et. al.* 2001, and Jonnaert *et al.* 2004.

In the opinion of the Conseil, the link between knowledge and competency should be defined from three different perspectives: research literature on competency development, the QEP and pedagogical practices.

3.1.1 Research Literature On Competency Development

Research literature on competency development clearly reveals that using and developing competencies cannot occur without first using knowledge, whether it is new knowledge or knowledge that the student has already acquired. For example, a student cannot effectively write a text in a given situation without prior mastery of some spelling rules and grammar. The act of engaging a competency presupposes that the student successfully completes the task, that is, by respecting the established requirements. The act of duly completing a task thus becomes essential, and one that reveals the level of a given competency's development.

Studies also show that knowledge is not the only resource to be leveraged when using a competency. The student can also draw on a range of resources: internal (values, attitudes, behaviours and strategies, etc.) and external (teachers, peers, reference works, software, Internet, etc.). Exercising a competency essentially stems from the student's use (leveraging and organizing) of the various resources (including his acquired knowledge) in effectively completing a task within the scope of a learning situation that approximates a realistic context. Indeed, this exercise goes beyond the simple act of amassing a range of resources; it involves choosing some resources over others, and integrating and using them when completing a complex task.

Teachers play a dual role in such a context. First, they must be able to place the student in learning situations of a certain complexity for him to be able to acquire new knowledge and exercise his competencies. Second, teachers must also ensure that the student acquires the necessary knowledge in exercising a given competency. Consequently, teachers must become active players and ensure that the student acquires the knowledge needed to effectively complete a task and be able to use that knowledge in a given context.

3.1.2 The Role Of Knowledge In the Québec Education Program

The Québec Education Program (QEP) was also conceived in the perspective of a competency-based approach. What role does the QEP assign to knowledge? Knowledge is clearly defined in the QEP as "essential knowledges" for the elementary level and "program content" for the secondary level, and grouped in separate sections of the subject-specific competencies. These groups encompass all the learning needed for the development and use of a given competency. This consists of "information on concepts, methods, strategies, processes, techniques and attitudes" (MELS 2004, p.16). This essential knowledge and program content are the repertoire of resources that students must acquire, as they are crucial to the acquisition of subject-specific competencies.

In the opinion of the Comité-conseil sur les programmes d'études, the scope of essential knowledge and program content in the QEP is vast. Mandated to study the QEP (preschool, elementary as well as Secondary Cycle I and II), this committee has repeatedly expressed concern regarding the volume of essential knowledge and program content prescribed by the QEP (Riopel 2007). In many of its

briefs, the committee has recommended scaling back essential knowledge and program content in order to focus more on *truly* essential knowledge, particularly on the development of the student's ability in leveraging it in a given context, which ultimately is the QEP's objective.

As the QEP is based on cycles of instruction,[15] the requirements regarding the level of competency development and the acquisition of a repertoire of essential knowledge or program content are established for each of the cycles. The QEP does not specify the possible links between essential knowledge and program content and subject-specific competencies; this work of connecting knowledge and competencies in realistic learning situations is the responsibility of teaching personnel and cycle teams, in some cases with the support of their school boards. Moreover, there is no single method of linking essential knowledge or program content to the competencies in the QEP; a range of configurations is possible.

The decision not to *a priori* impose a link between knowledge and content and competencies is consistent with the concept of teaching as a profession. Indeed, teaching demands considerable professional autonomy in order to be effective (CSE 2004). This decision is also consistent with the principle of decentralization, which, since the *Act Amending the Education Act* (Bill 180) came into effect in 1998, leaves significant manoeuvring room for local educational institutions to efficiently meet the needs of their students. It is in keeping with this spirit that *evaluation standards and procedures*[16] began to be used in schools. Teaching schedules (for a cycle of instruction or for each academic year) and the evaluation of the elements prescribed in the QEP (subject-specific competencies, essential knowledge and program content, cross-curricular competencies and broad areas of learning), were now being planned and drafted by teaching teams, always considering the needs of their students and the requirements of the QEP. Thus, the link between essential knowledge and program content and the competencies in the QEP is locally planned, first by teams and subsequently by individual teachers.

Pedagogical material approved by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) also provides benchmarks to teachers on the link between essential knowledge or program content and subject-specific or cross-curricular competencies in the QEP. In fact, the criteria for approval of pedagogical material specify that teaching guides must take into consideration all the elements in the QEP, and essential knowledge and program content are therein clearly cited. Teaching guides must equally provide "guidelines for preparation, class management and evaluation of learning; these guidelines are flexible and open enough to give teachers real professional autonomy" (Bureau d'approbation du matériel didactique 2004, p.12).

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15 "A cycle is a period of learning during which students acquire competencies in each subject area and cross-curricular competencies which prepare them for further studies" (*Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education*, s.15). There are three two-year cycles of instruction at the elementary level (Grades 1 and 2, Grades 3 and 4, and Grades 5 and 6) and two cycles at the secondary level (Secondary I and II and Secondary III, IV and V).

16 Evaluation standards and procedures are part of local framework mechanisms for the evaluation of learning. Each school must establish its own and make them public (MELS 2005a).

Components Of the Québec Education Program: An Overview

For the elementary level, the definition of a competency is "a set of behaviours based on the effective mobilization and use of a range of resources" (MELS 2001, p.4). These resources refer to "not only to everything that students have learned at school, but also to their experiences, skills, interests, etc." (ibid.) as well as a range of internal and external resources the student may use when accomplishing a task.

The Québec Education Program (QEP) itself is divided into five broad areas of learning,[17] which in turn are subdivided into programs of study (language of instruction, mathematics, social sciences, drama, etc.).

Each program of study in elementary schools must include the following:

- the wording of each of the competencies;
- the focus of the competencies (meaning, link to cross-curricular competencies, context for learning, and developmental profile);
- the key features of the competencies (essential processes in developing the competency);
- the evaluation criteria for each of the competencies (measurable benchmarks);
- end-of-cycle outcomes (guidelines specifying what is expected at the end of a given cycle of instruction).

At the end of each program of study, there are:

- cultural references (social and cultural resources that can foster developing the competency);
- essential knowledge: "These constitute the repertoire of resources indispensable for the development and exercise of the competency. This does not mean that students may not use other resources, but that they must master these knowledges in order to develop and exercise the competency" (MELS 2001, p.9). The QEP also indicates which knowledge must be developed during Cycle I, Cycle II and Cycle III, and throughout all three cycles.

For the secondary level, the QEP is also divided into broad areas of learning, and they are subdivided into programs of study as well (language of instruction, mathematics, second language, etc.).

In Secondary Cycle I, a competency is defined as a set of behaviours which require leveraging a range of resources. Each program of study includes the following:

- Introduction;
- Making the Connections: Subject and Other Dimensions of the QEP;
- Pedagogical Context;
- Competencies:
    - focus of the competency (reason for developing and assimilating the competency);
    - key features of the competency (main aspects and major factors);
    - evaluation criteria (measurable benchmarks);
    - end-of-cycle outcomes (overall view of requirements);

[17] Languages; Mathematics, Science and Technology; Social Science; Art Education; and Personal Development.

- Program Content: Provides "the knowledge—or resources—required for the development and use of the competency. It includes information on concepts, methods, strategies, processes, techniques and attitudes. [...] Finally, in one way or another, the program content includes cultural references, which correspond to social and cultural resources that can foster the development of the competency" (MELS 2004, p.16).

In Secondary Cycle II, competency is defined as "as the ability to act effectively by mobilizing a range of resources." (MELS 2007b, p.11). The programs of study comprise the same categories as Secondary Cycle I.

While the objective of the QEP is the development of competencies, it also specifies the information on essential knowledge or program content required for subject-specific competencies that the student must acquire during each of the cycles. These are an integral part of the QEP, and their features are therefore obligatory.

Examples Of Essential Knowledge and Program Content In the QEP

In order to better clarify the nature of essential knowledge and program content, some examples taken from English Language Arts are shown below.[18] Given the wide scope of this knowledge and content, the examples shown are but a small sample.

For the elementary level, the essential knowledge in **English Language Arts** involves the four competencies of the subject:

1. To read and listen to literary, popular and information-based texts
2. To write self-expressive, narrative and information-based texts
3. To represent literacy in her/his different media
4. To use language to communicate and learn[19]

[18] For examples of essential knowledge and program content for Mathematics, *see* Appendix 4.

[19] The language used to describe the competencies here is that used in the QEP and not that used in report cards and competency reports.

Some of this essential knowledge is comprised of:[20]

- reading and listening to literary, popular and information-based texts:
  - reading strategies (e.g. cuing systems);
  - view of the world through reading (e.g. comparison of texts);
- writing self-expressive, narrative and information-based texts:
  - understanding language (e.g. using linguistic structures);
  - writing process (e.g. writing for specific purposes and in different contexts);
- representing literacy in her/his different media:
  - strategies for constructing meaning (e.g. using a repertoire of strategies to unlock messages or meanings);
  - response process (e.g. making meaning of a media text);
- using language to communicate and learn:
  - language to communicate (e.g. collaborative improvisation and role-playing to communicate experiences);
  - linguistic structures and features (e.g. using language registers and non-verbal cues);

For Secondary Cycle I, program content for **English Language Arts** involves four competencies for the subject area:

1) Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn
2) Represents her/his literacy in different media
3) Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts
4) Writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes

Some of the related program content is as follows:[21]

- using language/talk to communicate and to learn:
  - interaction with peers and teacher in various learning contexts (e.g. collaboration, inquiry, research);
- representing her/his literacy in different media:
  - using information and communications technologies (e.g. using mixed media and multimedia resources to locate information, do research and communicate with others);
- reading and listening to written, spoken and media texts:
  - interpreting texts (e.g. exploring different interpretations of the same event/idea/subject/topic);
- writing a variety of genres for personal and social purposes:
  - developing a voice (e.g. writing about issues, events, interests, beliefs that are important);

20 For more information or a comprehensive list of essential knowledge, consult the *Québec Education Program: Preschool Education and Elementary Education* (MELS 2001 pp. 77–81, 86–90, 94–98, and 102–107).

21 For more information or a comprehensive list of program content, consult the *Québec Education Program: Secondary Cycle I* (MELS 2004, pp.96–99, 104–106, 113–115, and 121–126).

In the QEP, the terms "essential knowledges" and "program content" are used when referring to the resources students must acquire by the end of each cycle of instruction. For the sake of consistency the Conseil will expressly refer to this repertoire in its study of the link between this and competencies.

3.1.3 The Role Of Essential Knowledge and Program Content in Teaching Practices: The Teacher's Perspective

In a competency-based approach, teachers must make the link between essential knowledge or program content and competencies, both when preparing lessons or during learning or evaluation situations. Interviews conducted with 35 elementary and Secondary Cycle I teachers have enabled the Conseil to better understand how teachers incorporate this knowledge and content into their practices. While this analysis of the teachers' perspective is in no way an exhaustive account of teaching practices, it does reveal a range of practices that can better illustrate how essential knowledge or program content are integrated in competency development.

The Role Of Essential Knowledge and Program Content In Pedagogical Planning

The teachers stated that they prioritized essential knowledge and program content during planning. In some cases school boards set the allocation of competencies as well as essential knowledge and program content by cycle of instruction or by year, but this task could be equally carried out by cycle teams. A concern to "cover the program" is therefore present, both in essential knowledge and program content and in competency development.

The planning of a stage or a more detailed schedule (month, week, day, lesson) is done by the teacher, who also plans the learning and evaluation situations[22] that enable the student to acquire new knowledge and practice his competencies. For each of these situations the teacher defines the competencies, knowledge or content necessary to complete the task. The teacher also plans learning situations around the acquisition of essential knowledge or program content; that is, less complex situations where the student acquires content or practices a technique, for example.

Some teachers have followed—wholly or in part—learning situations recommended in the teaching guides, where links between essential knowledge and program content and competencies are defined. The teachers then used these situations, modifying them as needed. Teachers said they were relying on these guides less and less, and are either using other pedagogical resources more or creating their own learning situations.

22 "The term *situation*, as used here, means a set of one or more tasks that students must complete in order to reach a defined goal. Primarily, these situations offer students opportunities to develop and exercise one or more subject-specific or cross-curricular competencies. They are also used to monitor competency development in order to support learning; last, they are used to recognize competencies" (MELS 2006a, p.8). An example of a complex learning situation can be found in Appendix 5.

The Role of Essential Knowledge and Program Content In Learning Situations

Some of the teachers consulted by the Conseil were still not completely at ease with the Québec Education Program (QEP) and the evaluation of students in a competency-based approach. It is important to note that for some, the implementation of the QEP is fairly recent.

Two types of teaching practices with slight variations were observed. In complex learning situations, some teachers seemed to be more concerned with the acquisition of essential knowledge or program content than with developing competencies; these were addressed in carrying out meaningful activities for the student. However, the use of complex learning situations that target the development of true competencies only occurred a few times during the year. Teachers said they were nonetheless continuing with their adoption of these new practices.

Other teachers felt more at ease with the QEP and with planning and carrying out complex learning situations that targeted the use of competencies. For these teachers, essential knowledge and program content are at the heart of a learning situation since the student must apply them in order to successfully complete the task. The teachers' focus, then, is both on the acquisition of essential knowledge and program content and their use in completing a complex learning situation.

In the case where the student uses his competencies in a learning situation, teachers said they acted on two levels: in the student's acquisition of essential knowledge or program content, and in the process or approach that enabled the student to leverage his knowledge to complete the task. Helping the student to leverage his knowledge (and consequently enabling him to use his competencies) is, in their opinion, a very different task than the one which simply targets its acquisition.

What teaching actions could be taken to prompt students to practice using their knowledge in a given context? Teachers provided two possible approaches. Sometimes, they used model practices with their students, carrying out some parts of the activity themselves to provide the students with possible strategies. At other times, teachers discussed work methods or approaches at great lengths with their students, thus helping them express what they are doing and identify successful strategies.

Some teachers noted that their students often preferred to memorize lessons or content, particularly when it came to simple tasks. Consequently these students would then encounter problems adjusting their strategies and organizing their ideas. Using knowledge in completing complex tasks thus became difficult, and much practice was needed.

In what order should essential knowledge or program content and competencies be taught? Some teachers preferred to teach students the former (in different ways) and the students would then begin to carry out a complex learning situation where they could leverage their knowledge. This is known as linear learning; essential knowledge or program content is first acquired and then used to carry out a complex task. Other teachers used a spiral teaching approach: during a complex learning situation, they taught by scaffolding a range of knowledge or content, then returning to the original task. This is also another example of a sequence where knowledge and content precede their application, albeit with a shorter delay between the acquisition and the use of the new knowledge. It must be noted, however, that this acquisition can also occur in situations outside of direct teaching.

The Role Of Student Knowledge In the Evaluation Of Learning

During the preparation of a lesson, a teacher must plan both learning and evaluation situations. Complex tasks assigned to students can often foster learning and facilitate evaluation, depending on how they are structured. Some teachers consulted by the Conseil were still not completely at ease with evaluating the level of competency development. How can a teacher assess the ability of a student to use his knowledge in completing a task? Indeed, current evaluation methods are quite different from previous ones. Teachers are currently integrating new tools established in the *Policy For the Evaluation of Learning* to conform with the requirements of the QEP. While some teachers are more at ease with these tools, others have yet to fully adapt to the changes.

Consequently, in some cases, the results expressed on the report card may not always correspond to the student's level of competency development. More often than not, it reflects the student's ability to demonstrate his knowledge, but outside of the task at hand. In other words, while the student may use his competencies in a learning situation; during the evaluation the teacher assesses the acquisition of knowledge outside the context rather than the development of the competencies themselves.

When teachers evaluate the level of competency development, they rely on many "clues" that indicate the learning acquired:

- Comments written during observations (during the task);
- Annotated evaluation checklist of the student's work;
- Student's logbook, etc.[23]

The teacher's assessment ensues from a comparison of clues gathered about the student's work and certain evaluation criteria or indicators established at the time of planning the learning situation and evaluation. The portfolio[24] is often used to keep clues and a record of the progression of learning. Also referred to a student learning profile, the portfolio may come in a variety of forms.

Most of the teachers stated that they periodically evaluated their students' knowledge. Some did it through quizzes, spelling tests, exams, etc. This evaluation was useful in adjusting the planning of a lesson (diagnostic evaluation). Other methods used for gauging the acquisition of knowledge or content were observation and student production.

The Role Of Essential Knowledge and Program Content In Teaching Practices: Key Conclusions From Consultations With Teachers

Following an analysis of teachers' opinions, the Conseil draws three key conclusions. First, essential knowledge and program content are a constant in teaching practices. Not only are these teachers concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, but also with its application in the completion of a complex task.

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23 *See* Durand and Chouinard (2006) for other examples.

24 A portfolio is a collection of work completed by a student for a specific purpose (Legendre 2005). A portfolio can be used in all subjects.

Second, teachers very clearly stated that essential knowledge and program content is not "discovered" by the students on their own. Teachers planned for a range of activities targeting essential knowledge or program content and they ensured that students had integrated this knowledge. Furthermore, the completion of a task in a complex learning situation is not the ultimate goal, rather an opportunity for the student to acquire knowledge and to practice using it in a given context. Establishing quality learning situations thus becomes crucial, as these situations must enable the student to acquire this learning.

Lastly, the Conseil noted that teachers were moving toward new teaching practices, continuing with the wider adoption of the QEP and learning evaluation processes in a competency-based approach. While obviously not indicative of the overall situation, the Conseil noted this conclusion seems to corroborate the findings of the report of the Table de pilotage du renouveau pédagogique. "For example, between 56% and 71% of teachers—depending on the groups—indicated that they were confident in *achieving their teaching plans by using the QEP as a reference*" (Table de pilotage du renouveau pédagogique 2006, p.59, translation). The report also noted that "teachers of every group were revealed to be less comfortable with evaluation practices more directly linked to elements in the QEP; that is, preparing end-of-cycle reports, using evaluation criteria from the QEP, using end-of-cycle outcomes as defined in the QEP, and using scales of competency levels" (ibid., p.63, translation) A survey on evaluation practices conducted in Switzerland and in Québec by Lafortune and Allal revealed similar findings:

> "The shift from evaluating knowledge to evaluating competencies involves a complex process of modifying pedagogical practices [...] From these findings one can conclude that the change from evaluating knowledge to evaluating competencies is an evolutionary step." (Lafortune and Allal 2008, p.3, translation).

The implementation of the QEP requires the development of new teaching and evaluation practices. The teachers consulted by the Conseil, like many of their colleagues—if one follows the Table de pilotage report—are currently in the adoption phase of these new practices. Given the nature of these changes and the very recent implementation of the QEP, this is not surprising. It does, however, show the importance of continuing with the adoption of the QEP, and of the awareness of the time needed to do so.

3.1.4 The Role Of Knowledge Acquired By the Student In A Competency-Based Approach: Some Key Findings

In Section 3.1, the Conseil reviewed the role of knowledge and how it is expressed in a competency-based approach. This issue was examined from three perspectives: research literature on competency development, the Québec Education Program (QEP) and the teaching practices of 35 elementary and Secondary Cycle I teachers. In all three perspectives, knowledge or program content appear to be ubiquitous:

- Research literature revealed that competencies cannot be used without the leveraging of the student's knowledge.
- The QEP offers a range of essential knowledge and program content to be acquired by the end of each cycle of instruction.

- The development of standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning enables cycle teams and teachers to allocate pedagogical tasks over time for all the elements prescribed in the QEP (subject-specific competencies, essential knowledge and program content, cross-curricular competencies and broad areas of learning).
- Teachers consulted included this knowledge and program content, both in their lesson planning and in carrying out learning and evaluation situations.

However, the focus on the development of competencies demands greater effort than the acquisition of knowledge and ensuring the ability to use it in situations reflecting a realistic context. It is precisely this focus on the student's ability to leverage his knowledge that makes it necessary to consider essential knowledge and program content from a different perspective. The acquisition of knowledge is essential, but not an end unto itself. The QEP not only requires that students acquire knowledge, but that they be able to use it effectively in realistic situations that closely mirror daily life.

3.2 Can the Evaluation Of Competencies Reveal the Acquisition Of Knowledge?

Evaluating the level of competency development obviously should reveal some acquisition (or non-acquisition) of knowledge on the part of the student. This is the opinion of education researchers such as Scallon (2004) and ministerial documents on the subject. It is also an opinion shared by many of the teachers consulted in the preparation of this Brief, and is anchored in an evaluation approach of the level of competency development.

A competency, it should be reiterated, is:

> "a set of behaviours based on the effective mobilization and use of a range of resources [among which is the knowledge of the student]. A set of behaviours refers to the capacity to use appropriately a variety of resources, both internal and external, in particular, learnings acquired in school or in everyday life. One aim of a competency-based program is to ensure that students' learnings serve as tools for both action and thought, which is a form of action" (MEQ 2001, pp.4–5).

Evaluating the level of competency development would mean, then, that one must first determine whether a student can leverage the required resources (e.g. his knowledge) to accomplish a new and more complex task. When a student is able to successfully complete the task, this means he has acquired the necessary knowledge and can leverage and organize it in order to effectively complete the task. As teachers plan their learning situations by defining which knowledge or content will be taught and which competencies will be required for completing the task using the competency, they can then observe which knowledge the student may or may not have acquired. Evaluating the level of competency development thus implies that the level of the student's knowledge in completing the task can be observed.

Conversely, evaluating the acquisition of a given knowledge or content may not be able to indicate the student's ability to use it within a new and complex task. For example, a student may know a grammar rule by heart but he may not be sure when to use it in a writing situation. A student who does not pluralize a word with an "s" in a writing exercise has one of two problems: either he does not know this rule, or he has not learned the strategies for recognizing that the situation requires the use

of a plural. In the first case, the problem is related to content. In the second, the problem is more related to competency, or the student's ability to use his knowledge in a given situation.

The teacher may identify the nature of the problem through observation during the completion of the task, in exercises carried out in other situations or—in some cases—tests for assessing knowledge. In fact, the teacher had planned the activities considering the link between essential knowledge or program content and the competencies, carried out these activities, observed his students, taken copious notes and evaluated their productions. Therefore, with a range of available information to assess both competency development and the student's acquisition of knowledge or content, the teacher can then easily identify essential knowledge or program content the student may or may not have acquired.

Does the evaluation of a competency reveal the student's acquisition of knowledge? Ultimately the answer is yes, as competencies can only be used when the student leverages his knowledge. Learning situations are designed so that the student must use some competencies and certain knowledge in order to successfully complete a task.

Nevertheless, to fully grasp the nature of acquired or non-acquired knowledge during a given period of time, one needs to view the work of the student or obtain information from the teacher. This information, in fact, can be found in the teachers' planning as well as in the corpus of information collected at the time of evaluation.

As for the QEP, it provides a repertoire of essential knowledge and program content to be acquired by students for each cycle of instruction and for each program, and is thus less specific in this regard.

Chapter 4 The Communication Of Student Results

The Conseil examined the issue of communicating the results of student learning to parents from three different perspectives. In this chapter, it will first define the current legal and regulatory framework in which this activity must take place. Second, it will briefly describe what it learned from three experiments outside of Québec. Third, it will review the main conclusions drawn from the opinions of teachers consulted on this issue. Last, the Conseil will define its position on the function and inherent limitations of the report card.

4.1 Communication Of Student Results To Parents: Current Legal and Regulatory Framework

The issue of communication to parents falls within the scope of the legal and regulatory framework that grants schools flexibility enabling them to consider the needs of parents and the community which they serve. The Conseil studied this framework from two perspectives: the mandatory aspect of communication to parents and the process for establishing standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning that enable schools to meet the needs of their community.

4.1.1 Communication Of Student Results To Parents: Number, Type and Content

The *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education* stipulates the number of communications to parents, and their form and content, both for elementary and secondary education. Section 29 stipulates that a school must send parents:

- (1) at least 8 communications per cycle, including 5 report cards and an end-of-cycle competency report if the student is at the elementary school level or in the first cycle of secondary school;
- (2) at least 4 communications per year, including 2 report cards and an end-of-year competency report if the student is at the preschool level or in the second cycle of secondary school. (*Basic school regulation*, s 29)

Sections 30 and 30.1 also provide precise stipulations on the content of the report card and end-of-cycle competency report. In addition to information of a descriptive nature such as name and address, the report card must include:

- [...] (15) **the status of the development of the competencies** in the preschool program of activities or the programs of studies, if the competencies have been evaluated; the status of the development of the competencies for elementary and secondary education is expressed by a **percentage**. The competencies are indicated on the report card in the terms used in the programs, **with preference given to ordinary terms**;
- (15.1) the **student's result** and the **group average** for each subject taught, expressed as a **percentage**;

- (15.2) for an end of year report card for a student in the first, third or fifth year of elementary school or for a student in the first year of secondary school, **comments on the student's achievement during the reference period in relation to one or more cross-curricular competencies**, with reference to the standards and procedures for the evaluation of student achievement approved by the principal under subparagraph 4 of the first paragraph of section 96.15 of the Act; the competencies are indicated on the report card in the terms used in the programs, with preference given to ordinary terms;

- [...]

- The status of the development of the competencies referred to in subparagraph 15 of the first paragraph and the student's result referred to in subparagraph 15.1 are based on the conversion table established by the Minister for the program of studies.

- Subparagraphs 15 to 15.2 of the first paragraph do not apply to a student in pre-work training. Instead, the report card for that student must contain an indication of the student's progress in relation to the objectives set for the student by the teacher, with reference to the objectives of the program of studies established by the Minister. (*Basic school regulation*, s 30)

As for the competency report, it must include:

- [...] (1) an indication, expressed as a **percentage, of the level of development achieved by the student for each of the competencies** in the program of studies;

- (2) **comments on the student's achievement during the reference period in relation to one or more cross-curricular competencies**, with reference to the standards and procedures for the evaluation of student achievement approved by the principal under subparagraph 4 of the first paragraph of section 96.15 of the Act;

- (3) **the student's result and the group average** for each subject taught, expressed as a **percentage** and, for a secondary school student who passes, the credits for the subjects.

- The level of development of the competencies referred to in subparagraph 1 of the first paragraph and the student's result referred to in subparagraph 3 are based, where applicable, on the scales of competency levels and conversion tables established by the Minister for the programs of studies.

- Subparagraphs 1 and 3 of the first paragraph do not apply to students in pre-work training for whom the result in each subject is expressed by a rating.

- The competencies in the programs of studies and the cross-curricular competencies are indicated in the competency report in the terms used in the programs, with **preference given to ordinary terms**. (*Basic school regulation*, s 30.1)

Moreover, section 30 stipulates that "the report card must contain at least the following information," thus making it possible for schools to add other kinds of information if needed. Section 30.1 also does not preclude additional information in the competency report, as it stipulates that the competency report must include at least the elements therein mentioned.

In addition to the measures stipulated for communication to parents, schools have considerable flexibility should they need to include additional information on the report card or in the competency report, or should they wish to use other forms of communication. As a reference, schools can use the *standards and procedures for the evaluation of student achievement*, a mechanism specifically stipulated for this use in the *Education Act* and described in Section 4.1.2.

4.1.2 Communication Of Student Results To Parents: Standards and Procedures For the Evaluation Of Learning

In 1997, the *Act Amending the Education Act* (Bill 180) introduced major amendments to the *Education Act* in order to redistribute the sharing of responsibilities between schools and the school boards (Foster and Smith 1998, Brassard 2007). The intention of granting more responsibilities to schools was clearly stated in the Minister of Education's speech of November 25, and indeed the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation was quoted as being one source of inspiration for this measure:

> "The work of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation during the past decade and that of the Commission For the Estates General On Education during 1995–1996 have shown that to achieve success in education, we must place responsibility closer to the action, that is the school. [...] To renew the management model, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation has recommended to simplify structures and frameworks to allow for greater pedagogical responsibility to the school and to promote a more dynamic partnership, both internally and externally" (Minister of Education, November 25, 1997, translation).[25]

Moreover, the Conseil has often reiterated in its briefs the value of providing school stakeholders with the necessary flexibility to meet the needs of their local clientele.[26]

Consequently, Bill 180 transferred some responsibilities to schools in the area of the evaluation of learning and communication of student results to parents. Section 96.15, subparagraph 4 of the first paragraph stipulates that a school must adopt "standards and procedures for the evaluation of student achievement." These standards and procedures comprise a range of standard reference material on evaluation practices for all teachers in a school to consider the following stages in the evaluation process:

- Planning of evaluation;
- Information gathering and interpretation;
- Judgment;
- Decision/action;

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25 The Minister's speech is available online (in French) at: www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/MINISTRE/minis97/a971125.htm.

26 Namely in the following publications: CSE 1993, CSE 1996 and CSE 2006.

- Communication;
- Language quality (MELS 2005a, p.9).

The standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning that pertain specifically to parent communication allow schools to provide answers to a number of questions, namely:

- What means of communications are used during and at the end of a cycle?
- What is the role of each of these means of communication?
- How do we inform students (and their parents) about their strengths and the areas they need to improve in their learning?
- Does each communication have to include an assessment on all the competencies listed in the report card?
- Does the report card used by our school meet the requirements of the *Basic school regulation* and the Québec Education Program? (ibid, p.28).

Once approved by the school administration, these standards and procedures become policy, and are then used by all teachers. The school must then prepare an official document including all standards and procedures approved by the administration. This document is addressed to "those concerned with the evaluation of learning, especially teachers, and by the general public" (MELS 2005b, p.39).

The process of establishing standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning was designed to include the responsibilities and needs of each of the education partners. In other words, teachers recommend standards and procedures to school administrators for approval as follows:

- The principal is responsible for approving, on the proposal of the teachers [...]:

- [...]

- 4) the standards and procedures for the evaluation of student achievement, in particular, how parents are to be informed of the academic progress of their children, in keeping with the prescriptions of the basic school regulation and subject to the examinations that may be imposed by the Minister or the school board; (*Education Act*, s 96.15).

Per section 96.15 of the *Education Act*, school administrators must, however, submit some of the proposals to the governing board for consultation, namely those "proposals relating to how parents are to be informed of the academic progress of their children:"

- Before approving the proposals [...] and the proposals relating to how parents are to be informed of the academic progress of their children under subparagraph 4 of the first paragraph, the principal must consult with the governing board. (*Education Act*, s 96.15)

While the governing board does not have direct responsibility in the adoption or approval of these standards and procedures, it may voice its opinion on the matter.

Moreover, as of 2006,[27] section 89.1 of the *Education Act* stipulates that:

- "Parents on the governing board may consult the parents of the children in the school on any matter relating to educational services, in particular on report cards and on any other way in which parents are to be informed of the academic progress of their children, proposed under section 96.15." (*Education Act*, s 89.1)

The governing board can thus bring the perspective and need parents have for information to the attention of the school administration, therefore fostering the school/family relationship.

Consequently, school stakeholders (teaching personnel, school administrations, and governing boards) each have respective and clear responsibilities regarding report cards and competency reports; mechanisms stipulated in the *Education Act* enable each group of stakeholders to assume its responsibility, all the while taking into consideration the different needs of each partner. In addition, since 2005 the Ministère de l'éducation, du loisir et du sport has provided reference guides to schools and school boards to help them take ownership of their new roles in the evaluation of learning. One such guide is specifically on the process of developing standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning by schools (MELS 2005a).

4.2 Examples Outside Québec: Ontario, England and the French Community of Belgium

During its work on the present Brief, the Conseil briefly studied three current education systems outside Québec that are structured on a competency-based approach: Ontario, England and the French Community of Belgium. The Conseil did not conduct an in-depth analysis of the education program of each, rather it examined the forms of communication to parents defined in each.[28] The Conseil would like to caution that although these three education systems have approaches similar to the QEP, there are significant differences in transposing the elements of their programs and their levels of requirement.

In all three cases, a competency-based approach is reflected in curricula that greatly value knowledge beyond rote learning—in other words, a curriculum that helps the student apply his knowledge in new contexts. Also, the report card used in all three is relatively concise,[29] and includes general information on student achievement. It must be noted, however, that countries such as France and Switzerland also have established a competency-based approach and use a more detailed report card called a *livret de competences*.

It appears to the Conseil that in all three systems, there is an attempt to provide quality information to parents to complement the basic information on the report card.

In Belgium, for example, the report card is one of many communication tools. It must allow the level of competency development and not just discrete learning to be illustrated. In the sample report card

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27 Bill 32 (2006, chapter 51). *An Act to amend the Act respecting school elections and the Education Act*, assented to on December 14, 2006.

28 The information herein was largely inspired by the work of Desaulniers (2007).

29 In Ontario the report card is mandatory, while in England only its content is mandated. In the French Community of Belgium, different types of report cards are used as they are not mandatory.

examined by the Conseil, the "comments" boxes specifically provided space for teachers to include additional information or each subject. Parents can also consult the student learning profile (the equivalent of the portfolio in Québec) so they may better gauge the strengths and weaknesses of their child. A grade on this appears on the report card.

In Ontario, the report card for elementary education provides information on the student's performance against the requirements of the provincial curriculum pertaining to the development of competencies for each subject.[30] Moreover, in the section "Strengths/Weaknesses/Next Steps" teachers can include meaningful information on the student's progress in each of the subjects. Another section of the report card is also reserved for the evaluation of competencies, which are very similar to the cross-curricular competencies of the QEP. The last page of the report card is reserved for parent and student comments.

In England, the report card must include the overall outcomes by subject as well as information on student achievement. Also, at the end of a cycle, the end-of-year report card must provide information on the student's progress against the requirements of the programs, as well as the level attained by the student group and by the same age nationally. The report card also has a section reserved for the teacher to include additional information on the strengths and weaknesses of the student.

Thus from these three models, the report card—whether using grades or ratings—does not appear to be the only way to inform parents. Information complementary to the report card—such as the portfolio or even additional information included on the report card—can be useful to parents, and more significant and individualized regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the student.

4.3 Communication Of Student Results To Parents: The Teachers' Perspective

During its consultations with teachers the Conseil raised the topic of communication to parents. For most of the teachers, communication with parents not only occurred through the report card or the competency report. Many believed that these two practical tools enabled teachers to present their professional assessment based on a range of information collected throughout the evaluation of the student's learning, but they could not encompass the entire scope of everything the student had learned.

Some teachers acknowledged parents' need for information, and are currently meeting this need through means other than the report card and competency report. For most teachers, information on the learning acquired by the student could also be conveyed through homework activities, productions, tests signed by parents or the portfolio. According to these teachers, if parents were to receive information on classroom work and could see their child's work on a regular basis, then results shown on the report card would not be unexpected. The report card would then officially report information that parents already knew. When report cards are sent to parents or at the parent-

[30] There are, for example, five areas of study in mathematics: Number Sense and Numeration, Measurement, Geometry and Spatial Sense, Patterning and Algebra, and Data Management and Probability for Mathematics.

teacher meeting, the portfolio or the three-way meeting[31] are two methods that are sometimes used to further explain the level of competency development and the level of knowledge acquired by the student.

As for the specific issue on how to report acquired knowledge on a report card or in a competency report, in general teachers were not able to provide many suggestions. Some stated that it would perhaps be better to write more personalized comments on the acquisition of knowledge related to the development of each competency. They did emphasize, however, that this was additional work linked to parent communication and not of direct service to the student.

Many teachers stated they did not feel it was necessary to specifically convey the knowledge acquired by the student, since the evaluation of their competencies would ultimately do so. Others believed that the evaluation of acquired knowledge without reference to the student's ability to leverage it in context would be information that is not aligned with the objectives of the QEP and therefore might create confusion. Still others believed that the QEP contains too much essential knowledge and program content to make it realistically feasible to precisely report their acquisition. Lastly, teachers said that many of the practices they have developed (regular information, portfolio, etc.) already met the needs of parents, and questioned the validity of doing otherwise.

4.4 The Report Card: A Limited Communication Tool

In a recent brief, the Conseil made a clear distinction between the teacher's evaluation of student learning and the communication of this evaluation's results to parents:

> " [...] regardless of whether used as learning aid or a certification of study, evaluation is a professional activity performed by a teacher that requires a methodological approach and an application of complex concepts. As for communications to parents, this consists of methods by which teachers convey the evaluation results to parents" (CSE 2007b, p.52).

Regardless of whether communication to parents is done through a report card or any other form requires transposing the results of the teacher's evaluation and professional assessment.

In the Conseil's opinion, the *raison d'être* of a report card is to inform parents and the students themselves on the latter's performance (CSE 1992). It must include information relevant to student achievement and progress and allow parents to support their child in his learning (CSE 1992 and CSE 2007a). In essence, parents should thus be able to see how their child is progressing and meeting curricular requirements (either by cycle of instruction or by academic year) and should be informed of any difficulties that have arisen and what actions they could take to support them.

Consequently, any debate on report card content must address the accessibility of the information required by parents in addition to the nature of the information itself, as most parents do not possess a professional educational background. These are inherent challenges, regardless of the form the

[31] A three-way meeting is a special meeting with the parent and/or student where the report card or the portfolio is handed out and the teacher provides guidance and supplementary information if needed. For more information, see Durand and Chouinard 2006, pp.317–326.

report card takes. The Conseil voiced the same opinion in 1992, when the report card was very different than that of today:

> "Although the message to be conveyed is complex in and of itself, so is the choice of a language accessible to all. It is nonetheless difficult for parents to interpret the information conveyed to them, and their options for intervention following receipt of their child's report card are often very limited. Yet these challenges would remain regardless of whatever form the report card takes" (CSE 1992, p.28, translation).

Moreover, according to Desjardins, due to its inherent nature the report card ultimately remains a limited tool and cannot convey everything the student has learned:

> "Summarizing an assessment in its simplest expression involves a loss of information. Unlike judges, who, when they render a decision present a detailed argument of the analysis that led to their decision, teachers have only the space for a single letter or number to express their assessment. The ultimate communication challenge if there ever was one! The report card cannot express everything and its limitations must be acknowledged" (Desjardins 2006, p.34, translation).

Similarly, the Conseil concurs that the report card cannot convey the entirety of learning acquired by the student; which moreover is not its key objective. Its purpose is rather to present relevant and meaningful information while remaining accessible and concise. The report card thus necessitates transposing the teacher's professional assessment on a range of information collected from the evaluation of the student's learning.

CHAPTER 5 CONVEYING THE STUDENT'S ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE: APPROACHES AND RECOMMENDATION

Following its broader examination of the Québec Education Program (QEP) and the role of knowledge in a competency-based approach, in this chapter the Conseil will address the specific issue of how to convey knowledge acquired by the student. It will first outline the guiding principles supporting its study, then define the stakeholders, in its opinion, best placed to define the method of conveying this knowledge. Lastly, the Conseil will also examine a number of practical methods to do so while still respecting the guiding principles.

5.1 The Conseil's Study: Guiding Principles

The Conseil based its study on four guiding principles. The first two were drawn from its interpretation of the Minister's request for the present Brief. As this request does not entail any amendments to legislative or regulatory frameworks and as the Minister has clearly indicated her will to continue with the current education reform, the Conseil deems that the method to best convey knowledge acquired by the student must:

1. be consistent with the QEP and the *Policy On the Evaluation Of Learning*, in particular in maintaining their rigorous requirements, such as the development of competencies in a student;
2. continue with the current adoption process of the QEP by teachers, within the perspective of harmonizing their evaluation practices in a competency-based approach.

Moreover, to effectively meet the need of parents for information, the Conseil deems that the method to best convey knowledge acquired by the student must:

3. provide parents with meaningful, clear and relevant information.

Lastly, to be practical, this method of conveying knowledge acquired by the student must:

4. be feasible, particularly regarding teaching practices and the availability of tools needed to produce report cards and competency reports.

The principle of standardization among schools was not a key consideration for the Conseil in the study for this Brief. The Conseil would like to note that it favours local decision-making in this area, for reasons previously mentioned. It also deems that measures in the *Basic school regulation* do ensure a certain standardization and foster student mobility. In addition, as defined in the *Policy On the Evaluation of Learning*, teachers must ensure their students acquire the essential knowledge or program content as established in the QEP, but that this evaluation should be done solely for diagnostic purposes, and be used by teachers to carry out necessary modifications to planned learning activities. In other words, the purpose of this information is to make pedagogical adjustments for teachers and students (as well as to inform parents), and not to be used for attestation purposes.

Consequently, it is the opinion of the Conseil that the existence of a wide range of methods to convey the knowledge acquired by the student should not be seen a source for concern, but rather a source of wealth for each school community.

5.2 Meeting Parents' Need For Information: Building On the Dynamic Relationship With Local Stakeholders

The Conseil interprets the interest in the method for conveying knowledge acquired by the student as a will to meet the need parents have for information. As parents are a heterogeneous group and have diverse needs, the Conseil believes that the best method of conveying this information would be one that considers the needs of parents in the local school community and build on the existing teaching practices therein. In other words, decisions in the matter should leverage the dynamic relationship with local stakeholders.

Moreover, the decentralization of Québec education begun in 1997 with Bill 180 manifested itself in the area of the evaluation of learning by restructuring local frameworks, notably through the reallocation of the responsibilities of the Ministère de l'éducation, du loisir et du sport (MELS), school boards and schools. The *Policy For the Evaluation Of Learning* and its related reference guides produced by the MELS clearly indicate this will to bring the locus of decision-making closer to schools and school boards, while still maintaining the responsibility of the MELS in the stewardship of the education system (MEQ 2003, MELS 2005b).

The Conseil also noted in its consultations with teachers that information conveyed to parents—whether through the report card or throughout the academic year—varied greatly, both in quantity and type. In some communities, parents received information about classroom work on an almost daily basis through the school agenda, homework, assignments, activity notebooks, evaluations during a stage, etc. In addition to the report card, teachers in some schools sent to parents a selection of student productions (student learning profile or portfolio) done in the classroom during the course of a stage. In these communities, parents' need for information has to a large extent already been met. In other schools, information appears to be conveyed to parents less regularly, with the report card and the competency report being the main tools used, unless a specific challenge in a student warrants increased communication between parent and teacher.

For the Conseil, any debate on the methods of conveying knowledge acquired by the student must be anchored in the local school community. Some schools may require a more detailed report card or competency report, in others the information already available may be considered sufficient for all involved. The responsibility entrusted to school stakeholders regarding standards and procedures for the evaluation learning provide schools with the necessary autonomy to effectively meet this need, and to comply with the *Basic school regulation* on report cards and competency reports. Indeed, the *Basic school regulation* does not preclude additional information or any other type of report cards or competency reports, provided that the regulations are adhered to.

Moreover, the findings of a New Zealand study revealed that schools recognized as successful in their communications with parents[32] were those that regularly consulted with the latter to gain a better understanding on how they received information on the learning of their child. This was done through surveys and focus groups. Many methods of communication were used and the schools consistently followed up on parent satisfaction with these methods. Where schools did not develop efficient parent communication practices, the ability of parents to play a role in the educational success of their child appeared limited (ERO 2007).

5.3 Conveying the Student's Acquired Knowledge: A Review

Following the Minister's request, the Conseil examined certain methods of conveying knowledge acquired by the student.

5.3.1 Conveying the Student's Acquired Knowledge: Guiding Principles

The Conseil presents below two effective methods of conveying knowledge acquired by the student it deems respect the guiding principles set forth in Section 5.1.

Providing Information Complementary To Report Cards and Competency Reports

The most effective method of conveying knowledge acquired by the student **would provide to parents information complementary to the report card and the competency report, in the form of a student learning profile, portfolio or any other method deemed appropriate by the teacher.**

As noted in Chapter 3, the evaluation of the student's competency development can also reveal his acquisition of knowledge. A student who uses his competencies to successfully complete a given task has undoubtedly acquired the essential knowledge or program content needed to carry it out. In fact, in planning tasks teachers define the essential knowledge or program content to be used for each competency, then plan and carry out learning activities that enable the student to acquire this knowledge or content and develop his ability to leverage it in context. Therefore, the evaluation of learning must be closely related to its planning—this allows teachers to modify the planning of learning activities to ensure the student acquires a range of essential knowledge or program content and attains the required level of development for each competency. To carry out the evaluation, teachers must have a wide range of information on student learning at their disposal: observation checklists, assignments, evaluation checklists, notes in the student's profile, results of diagnostic evaluations, etc. Starting from this information (and with the help of established criteria) the teacher can then assess the student's level of competency development.

The Conseil deems that this available information could be of great interest to parents. Student assignments, for example, reveal work done in class and clearly show whether knowledge was (or

[32] These schools provided parents with information that faithfully conveyed student achievement and progress. The comprehensive information on existing evaluation processes enabled parents to support their children in their education path. Parents' opinion in this matter was also greatly valued (ERO 2007, pp.37–38).

was not) acquired, and learning situations (which require the leveraging of knowledge) show whether the student was able to use his competencies.

Many teachers consulted by the Conseil used student learning profiles[33] to this end. These are personal profiles storing each student's various productions, completed activities and achievements. According to these teachers, such profiles can provide valuable information to parents so they may more readily understand the results expressed on the report card or in the competency report. There are many different kinds of student learning profiles. Some teachers keep profiles throughout the academic year and include in them most of the student's work; others use them at evaluation time and include in them work that is useful to support their assessment ("clues" or "proofs" of a sort).

The interest in providing parents with complementary information rests on the possibility of conveying competency development and the acquisition of knowledge observed in carrying out a learning situation, and provides parents with meaningful, clear, and relevant information on the development of competencies in context. This method is consistent with the Québec Education Program (QEP) and the *Policy For the Evaluation of Learning* inasmuch as it respects their rigorous requirements, such as the development of competencies. It is also consistent with the continuation of the current adoption process of the QEP and the *Policy For the Evaluation of Learning* by teachers. As it entails using information already available to teachers, providing complementary information would not mean implementing new, costly and time-consuming methods of evaluation.

Providing Additional Information On Report Cards Or In Competency Reports

Another method for conveying knowledge acquired by the student would be to **include on the report card or in the competency report personalized comments on the student's strengths and weaknesses in the area of essential knowledge or program content exercised during a stage and to place this information in the context of a given competency or subject.**

As already stated, teachers have considerable information at their disposal on the knowledge acquired by their students and the latter's ability to leverage it in situations that closely reflect a realistic context. Teachers could thus include one or two comments on the report card or in the competency report on the acquisition of essential knowledge or program content for selected competencies (one explored during the course of a stage, for example) or for a subject in general.

This method would be in keeping with the QEP and the *Policy For the Evaluation of Learning*, and would not hinder their current adoption process by teachers. This could provide parents with personalized and meaningful information on the progress of their child and would complement the results on the development of their competencies.

Including personalized comments would, however, entail additional steps in recording the information on the report card or in the competency report. In fact, for comments on the strengths and challenges of the student to be meaningful, they must be personalized, and make direct reference to the relevant essential knowledge or program content. A comment such as "there is room for improvement" is an example of an ineffectual message, as it does not provide any useful information to parents.

[33] The term "portfolio" is currently used to refer to student learning profiles, which come in a variety of forms.

The Conseil understands that including meaningful comments can be a challenge, both at the elementary and secondary levels. In fact, a secondary school teacher may have up to 180 students under his charge, but rarely teaches more than once subject. At the elementary level, a teacher may have fewer students than his secondary counterpart, but teaches more than one subject. In this case it would be practical to establish a bank of comments to simplify the process, provided the comments remain meaningful for students and their parents. The availability of IT tools for producing report cards could prove to be an interesting option in this area. To be feasible, however, only some competencies or programs could be considered. Although this method may lead to the development of new and challenging practices, these could easily be met as some schools are already using them, both at the elementary and Secondary Cycle I levels.[34]

5.3.2 Conveying the Student's Acquired Knowledge: Some Inconsistent Practices

During its study, the Conseil noted that certain practices, were they to be used by some school communities might generate confusion or inconsistencies, as they conflict with the guiding principles set forth in Section 5.1.

Conveying Knowledge Acquired By the Student: An All-inclusive Approach

The first practice would be **conveying knowledge acquired by the student in an all-inclusive manner**. This definitely constitutes a challenge in terms of feasibility. Indeed, the scope of essential knowledge and program content is far too great for an all-inclusive approach to succeed. Moreover, no previous report card has ever purported to convey all the knowledge acquired by the student. While the concept of selecting specific essential knowledge or program content to be included on the report card or in the competency report may appear interesting, it would beget, however, endless debate among school communities as to the definition of "essential."

The Conseil also deems that this practice would create an imbalance between the value placed on competencies and that placed on essential knowledge and program content. In fact, the QEP encompasses not only the acquisition of essential knowledge and program content but the development of higher competencies as well. If the report card or competency report would include a single grade on each competency but several pages on essential knowledge or program content, there is a danger of favouring knowledge and content over the development of competencies, thus lowering the QEP's standards and consequently creating inconsistency with the program.

Lastly, the dissemination of a list of essential knowledge and program content might also create confusion due to the scope and complexity of some of the information, particularly at the secondary level. Some programs at the secondary level may appear complicated and incoherent to the uninitiated; the Conseil would like to note that the content of the QEP is addressed to education professionals and the use of specialized language is justified.

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34 The Conseil did not consult Secondary Cycle II teachers, as the implementation of the QEP for this level had either just begun or had yet to be implemented.

Out-of-context Evaluation Of Knowledge: A Step Backward

A second practice that could create confusion would be **maintaining** or **re-introducing out-of-context evaluation of knowledge**, resulting in a juxtaposition of two different evaluation processes, with the ensuing result reflected on the report card.

Essentially, this method would consist of one process focusing on the quantity of knowledge acquired by the student, and the other on his level of competency development, that is, his ability to leverage a range of resources (including knowledge) in order to efficiently complete a complex task.

Out-of-context evaluation of the student's acquired knowledge would thus require reviewing previous learning assessments to quantify the knowledge acquired by the student, a perspective that would result in amassing knowledge or content out of context and not using it in a realistic context. This corpus of knowledge or content is measured with examinations that require the student to remember it outside of a meaningful context; a type of evaluation compatible with previous curricula based on objectives. With the QEP, however, this type of examination can only be useful for making pedagogical adjustments, for example, teachers modifying learning activities. The QEP's objective is the development of competencies, in other words, for the student to leverage knowledge in order to complete a meaningful and complex task. The distinction between evaluation practices compatible with previous curricula and those aligned with the QEP has been explored in various studies on the evaluation of learning in a competency-based approach, namely in Scallon (2004) and Durand and Chouinard (2006).[35]

Thus a return to out-of-context evaluation of knowledge would be inconsistent with the QEP and would not be consistent with its current adoption process by teachers. Moreover, the Conseil strongly questions the validity of maintaining two parallel systems of evaluation, one compatible with the older curricula, and the current system of evaluation harmonized with the QEP.

Lastly, a traditional system of evaluation of learning would foster a measurement of learning based on "quantifying and counting, tests and objectives" (Scallon 2004, p.25, translation). This is often transposed into percentages to express student achievement. At best, percentages are an indicator that allows parents to see that their child remembered 40%, 60% or 90% of the essential knowledge or program content during an exam, without providing any information on the nature of the knowledge acquired nor the ability of their child to use it in a meaningful context.

5.4 Recommendation

Considering:

- the diverse needs for information on the part of parents;
- the range of current teaching practices regarding communication of student results to parents;
- the responsibilities that schools have toward the communication of student results to parents;

[35] See Appendix 6 for the perspective of Durand and Chouinard (2006) on these differences.

- the existence of official mechanisms that enable local schools to adapt standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning, consistent with the needs of their community and teaching practices,

1. **the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation recommends to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport to engage schools in building on the process of establishing *standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning* stipulated by the *Education Act*, in order to define the best method of conveying knowledge acquired by the student, and that this be done in adherence with the following principles:**

    - consistency with the Québec Education Program (QEP) and the *Policy For the Evaluation Of Learning*, particularly in upholding their rigorous requirements for the development of competencies by the student;
    - respect for the current adoption process of the QEP by teachers;
    - the value of providing meaningful, clear, and relevant information to parents in their community;
    - the feasibility, particularly in the area of pedagogical practices and the availability of tools to produce report cards and competency reports.

CHAPTER 6 FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS: APPROACHES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Conseil, communication between parents and teachers is a major lever that promotes the educational success of the student. Well-informed parents who have a better understanding of the Québec Education Program (QEP) as well as the work carried out in the classroom can more readily follow and support their child in his learning. Parent-teacher communication is, then, one of the cornerstones in the development of a co-active and co-efficient school/family partnership.

Following its examination of the methods of conveying the student's acquired knowledge, the Conseil studied the broader issue of parent-teacher communication, and defined three favourable conditions for better communication in this area.

6.1 Providing Regular Information To Parents On Classroom Work

In its consultations with teachers, the Conseil noted that teachers have at their disposal information on the knowledge acquired by students and their ability to leverage this in context (their competency development). This information can take a variety of forms: graded notebooks, evaluation checklists, observation checklists, test and quiz results, assignments, etc. In some cases teachers prepared the student's portfolio with the latter's help, to record clues for assessing the level of their competency development. Starting from this and with the help of established criteria, teachers can then assess the level of the student's competency development, and transpose this assessment into a rating or grade. Teachers, then, have a comprehensive portfolio to assist them in grading students against the requirements of the program, while parents only see the result: a rating or a grade.

According to some teachers, parents receive considerable information throughout the academic year. For example, their child's work, annotated evaluation checklists, as well as tests and quizzes that parents need to sign. Parents of elementary students had to sign their child's agenda to show that homework was being done and to ensure that student workbooks were not being left behind. Moreover, in some cases portfolios were very useful to illustrate the content studied as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the student. The student's acquired (or non-acquired) knowledge can be easily observed from these productions. When this information is communicated on a regular basis to parents, teachers stated that the rating or the grade appeared to be well understood by the former. In other words, parents were not surprised by the results on the report card; it confirmed what they intuitively knew.

The Conseil deems, then, that there is a need to further develop practices that could regularly provide parents with information on classroom work and their child's progress. This would not necessarily require an increase in the number of official communications sent to parents, but rather use the teacher's annotated productions of the student to begin a parent-child dialogue on their learning.

The Conseil acknowledges, however, that these practices are more prevalent in elementary schools than in secondary schools. In fact, Secondary Cycle II students in particular tend to be more

independent and parents often play a smaller role in their day-to-day school lives. Although the support of parents may be less evident, it is nonetheless incumbent on parents and teachers to find innovative means of communication that would embrace the student who asserts greater freedom.

6.2 The Québec Education Program and Better Informed Parents

The function of the report card and the competency report is not to explain the objective nor the structure of the Québec Education Program (QEP) to parents, for this would be beyond the scope of their original purpose. However, the Conseil would like to raise the question of the availability of information in everyday language for parents to help them better understand the foundations, objectives and content of the QEP as well as the evaluation of learning.

Following its consultations with teachers, the Conseil noted that teachers very often had to inform parents about the QEP or even the education reform itself. Indeed, several teachers stated that relatively few parents knew about the QEP. As this is a specialized tool for education professionals, not many parents would have access to a vulgarized version. Moreover, teaching and evaluation practices in a competency-based approach encompass processes which parents are seldom familiar with. Indeed, these are very different processes than the ones from their student days. Teachers thus often find themselves in the position of having to explain and justify the current reform. Although they clearly acknowledge their responsibility in this area, teachers also believed that the school boards and the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport have an equally important role to play in this, and feel this role is not being fully assumed by them, or at best, is not being assumed in a collaborative fashion.

For the Conseil, clear information on the QEP adapted for non-education professionals could reassure some parents regarding the Program's rigorous requirements and provide them with a greater number of benchmarks when interpreting their child's report card or competency report. Therefore the Conseil recommends the development of a global communications strategy between the education system and parents, built on clear and accessible information. The Conseil emphasizes, however, that the current wording of the QEP should not be revised in order to make it more accessible; the QEP is first and foremost a tool designed for teachers and educators, and should therefore remain a specialized tool for professional use.

Lastly, the Conseil notes that although the QEP has been in place since 2000 (at the elementary level), every year new parents enter the school system at the same time as their young children. As these new parents have their own previous education experience as a reference, information on the QEP and the education reform in general would best be provided to them in an ongoing fashion.

6.3 Ongoing Professional Development For A Successful Implementation Of the Québec Education Program and the *Policy For the Evaluation Of Learning*

Teachers consulted by the Conseil related how they incorporate essential knowledge or program content in their planning, in carrying out learning situations, in evaluating the level of competency development in the student, and in communications to parents. In these consultations the Conseil noted that some teachers expressed concern regarding the degree of adoption of the competency-

based approach. Indeed, teachers need to adopt new approaches. For some teachers, this process has been ongoing for several years, while for others it is relatively recent.

The Conseil has already emphasized the impact on teachers and challenges brought on by the Québec Education Program (QEP) (CSE 2003). The implementation of any new curriculum is a considerable undertaking for teaching personnel and the QEP is no exception. The report of the Table de pilotage sur le renouveau pédagogique (2006) not only reveals the path taken by teachers but also that they are still in the process of adopting the QEP. In 2007, the Comité-conseil sur les programmes d'études, mandated with studying the progressive adoption of the QEP, called for benchmarks and favourable conditions to promote innovative teaching practices harmonized with the QEP (Comité-conseil sur les programmes d'études 2007). The calendar for the implementation of the QEP for all basic education extends for a period of almost ten years; indeed, the level of adoption varies among teachers. It must be noted, then, that teachers are still in the adoption phase of the QEP, particularly those at the secondary level. Consequently, teachers should continue to be supported in the harmonization of their practices, both in their teaching and evaluation of learning and in communications to parents.

In the opinion of the Conseil, the greater teachers' ease with the QEP and its related teaching and evaluation practices, the greater their ability and confidence to clearly explain to parents the results of their professional assessment expressed on the report card or in the competency report, thus enabling parents to better support their child.

6.4 Recommendations

Considering that information conveyed in report cards and competency reports is inherently limited,

2. **The Conseil recommends that teachers provide parents on a regular basis with information on the student's classroom work and progress, and do so throughout the academic year in the form of homework, assignments, activity notebooks, projects, notes in the agenda, telephone communication, etc.**

Considering the value of increased parental awareness of the objectives of the Québec Education Program (QEP), to better understand the information available on their child's learning,

3. **The Conseil recommends to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport and to school boards to develop a global and harmonized communication strategy on the broad objectives and overall content of the Québec Education Program, adapted to their respective clientele.**

Considering the importance of a better understanding of pedagogical and evaluation practices developed within the framework of the QEP's implementation,

4. **The Conseil recommends to governing boards, school administrations and teaching personnel to establish a communication strategy that enables parents to better understand current pedagogical and evaluation practices, and, as a corollary, to**

include a greater number of benchmarks for understanding the content of the report card and the competency report.

Considering the importance of taking ownership of the QEP and the *Policy For the Evaluation Of Learning* by teachers themselves and its impact, notably on the communication to parents,

5. **The Conseil recommends to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport to continue her stewardship in the implementation of the Québec Education Program and the *Policy For the Evaluation Of Learning*, in order to provide the appropriate support to teaching personnel.**

CONCLUSION

Following the request submitted by the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport, the Conseil has herein presented a Brief on the methods of conveying knowledge acquired by the student. In light of its study and consultation with academic experts, teachers and its own resources, the Conseil deemed that in order to effectively meet the diverse needs of parents and take into account existing communication practices, the method of conveying this acquired knowledge can assume many forms. The Conseil acknowledged that parents are a heterogeneous group with diverse needs for information and that methods of conveying knowledge acquired by the student are best defined by local schools. Moreover, it also noted that current regulatory mechanisms give schools the option of establishing a repertoire of communications to parents while respecting their needs, current teaching practices and measures governing report cards and competency reports stipulated in the *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education.*

The Conseil has also presented guiding principles which, in its opinion, should be adhered to regardless of the method chosen to convey knowledge acquired by the student. These principles were all inspired by the need for consistency with the Québec Education Program (QEP), the need for clear and accessible information conveyed to parents, the importance of supporting the adoption process of the QEP by teachers, as well as the feasibility of current pedagogical practices and available tools. The Conseil has presented methods it deemed conveyed the knowledge acquired by the student while still adhering to these principles.

In addition, considering the value of parent-teacher communication in the development of a co-active and co-efficient school/family partnership, the Conseil presented three favourable conditions that could foster such communication in a more inclusive manner. The Conseil firstly emphasized the importance of providing regular information on the student's classroom work, to advise parents on the progress of their child and thus enable them to better gauge the level of his competency development and knowledge acquired. The Conseil then recommended a global communication strategy be jointly established by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, school boards and schools, to better inform parents on the QEP and on pedagogical practices and evaluation developed within the framework of the Program. Lastly, the Conseil maintained the importance of supporting professional development for teachers in their current adoption process of the QEP, which, like any other change of curriculum, is a great challenge. The Conseil noted that the implementation of the QEP is progressive and extended over a long period of time, and emphasized that many teachers continue to participate, albeit in different degrees, in an approach of taking ownership that requires sustained professional development.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering:

- the diverse needs for information on the part of parents;
- the range of current teaching practices regarding communication of student results to parents;
- the responsibilities that schools have toward the communication of student results to parents;
- the existence of official mechanisms that enable local schools to adapt standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning, consistent with the needs of their community and teaching practices,

1. **the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation recommends to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport to engage schools in building on the process of establishing *standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning* stipulated by the *Education Act*, in order to define the best method of conveying knowledge acquired by the student, and that this be done in adherence with the following principles:**

    - consistency with the Québec Education Program (QEP) and the *Policy For the Evaluation Of Learning*, particularly in upholding their rigorous requirements for the development of competencies by the student;
    - respect for the current adoption process of the QEP by teachers;
    - the value of providing meaningful, clear, and relevant information to parents in their community;
    - the feasibility, particularly in the area of pedagogical practices and the availability of tools to produce report cards and competency reports.

Considering that information conveyed in report cards and competency reports is inherently limited,

2. **The Conseil recommends that teachers provide parents on a regular basis with information on the student's classroom work and progress, and do so throughout the academic year in the form of homework, assignments, activity notebooks, projects, notes in the agenda, telephone communication, etc.**

Considering the value of increased parental awareness of the objectives of the Québec Education Program (QEP), to better understand the information available on their child's learning,

3. **The Conseil recommends to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport and to school boards to develop a global and harmonized communication strategy on the broad objectives and overall content of the Québec Education Program, adapted to their respective clientele.**

Considering the importance of a better understanding of pedagogical and evaluation practices developed within the framework of the QEP's implementation,

4. **The Conseil recommends to governing boards, school administrations and teaching personnel to establish a communication strategy that enables parents to better understand current pedagogical and evaluation practices, and, as a corollary, to include a greater number of benchmarks for understanding the content of the report card and the competency report.**

Considering the importance of taking ownership of the QEP and the *Policy For the Evaluation of Learning* by teachers themselves and its impact, notably on the communication to parents,

5. **The Conseil recommends to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport to continue her stewardship in the implementation of the Québec Education Program and the *Policy For the Evaluation Of Learning*, in order to provide the appropriate support to teaching personnel.**

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APPENDIX 1 LETTER FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION

Gouvernement du Québec
La ministre de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport
et ministre responsable de la région de Laval

Conseil supérieur de l'éducation
28 JUIN

Québec, le 27 juin 2007

Madame Nicole Boutin
Présidente
Conseil supérieur de l'éducation
1175, avenue Lavigerie, bureau 180
Québec (Québec) G1V 5B2

Madame la Présidente,

Conformément à l'article 458 de la Loi sur l'instruction publique, je soumets à l'examen du Conseil supérieur de l'éducation un projet de règlement visant à modifier le Régime pédagogique de l'éducation préscolaire, de l'enseignement primaire et de l'enseignement secondaire. Je vous demande de me transmettre l'avis du Conseil au sujet des modifications qui y sont envisagées.

Les modifications au régime pédagogique qui sont soumises à votre attention visent à rendre le bulletin et le bilan des apprentissages faciles à comprendre par les parents. Le projet de règlement précise que les résultats des élèves seront désormais exprimés en pourcentage et que les compétences seront libellées selon des termes usuels. Vous noterez aussi que ce projet prévoit que le redoublement sera possible après l'une ou l'autre des années du primaire.

Par ailleurs, devant les préoccupations de certains relativement à l'approche par compétences et au niveau d'acquisition des connaissances par les élèves, je demande au Conseil de produire un deuxième avis dans lequel sera examinée la manière de rendre compte des connaissances acquises par l'élève dans le bulletin et le bilan des apprentissages. Je vous demande de bien vouloir me transmettre cet avis au cours de l'automne 2007.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame la Présidente, l'expression de mes sentiments les meilleurs.

MICHELLE COURCHESNE

p. j. (1)

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APPENDIX 2 LETTER FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORT TO EDUCATION INSTITUTION PERSONNEL

2 novembre 2007 à 10:15:12

Mesdames, Messieurs,

Voici maintenant dix ans, le Québec s'engageait dans une vaste démarche visant à renouveler l'école québécoise. Cette démarche, qu'on a d'abord appelée la "réforme", puis le "renouveau" pédagogique, n'a cessé depuis lors de susciter des commentaires contradictoires, tantôt positifs, tantôt négatifs. À titre de ministre, il m'apparaît opportun aujourd'hui d'exprimer clairement à tous les acteurs du réseau de l'éducation mes positions et intentions concernant le renouveau pédagogique.

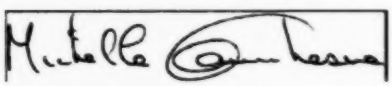
Tout d'abord, le renouveau pédagogique est là pour rester. Il a notamment permis de recentrer l'enseignement sur les matières de base, comme le français et la mathématique, et de rendre l'école québécoise plus exigeante envers les élèves en rehaussant les critères menant à l'obtention des diplômes. L'école d'aujourd'hui permet à nos jeunes d'élargir leurs horizons.

Mais des ajustements sont nécessaires. Nous avons déjà modifié les bulletins, qui seront maintenant plus facilement compréhensibles par les parents, et nous avons fait en sorte que les enfants qui éprouvaient de grandes difficultés puissent reprendre une année en cours de cycle. Il y a deux enjeux sur lesquels nous devons maintenant agir : l'aide aux élèves handicapés ou en difficulté d'adaptation, ainsi que la qualité et la maîtrise du français chez les élèves. Ces enjeux vous préoccupent également, j'en suis convaincue.

Comment s'assurer que les enfants qui éprouvent des difficultés reçoivent tous les services auxquels ils sont en droit de s'attendre et qu'ils soient dans le milieu qui répond le mieux à leurs besoins? Comment l'école peut-elle mieux répondre aux besoins de tous les enfants? Comment mieux soutenir le personnel enseignant dans le cheminement des enfants?

Quels moyens peut-on prendre pour que nos enfants apprennent un français de qualité et qu'ils connaissent la richesse des mots et la façon de les écrire? Ne devrions-nous pas rendre l'utilisation de la dictée plus systématique ? Comment l'école peut-elle contribuer à ce que notre langue demeure vivante et motif de fierté?

Ce sont là des défis qui méritent une attention plus immédiate de tous les acteurs du réseau de l'éducation. Que nous travaillions dans une école, dans une commission scolaire ou au Ministère, nous partageons un objectif commun : favoriser la réussite scolaire de nos jeunes. Notre responsabilité est donc importante. Ensemble, nous devons poursuivre l'amélioration de l'école québécoise et continuer de tout mettre en oeuvre pour préparer nos enfants à vivre dans un monde qui évolue rapidement et constamment.



Michelle Courchesne

APPENDIX 3 CONSULTATIONS WITH TEACHERS BY THE CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION

In order to capture the teacher's perspective on the issue of conveying knowledge acquired by the student, the Conseil conducted interviews with 35 elementary and Secondary Cycle I teachers, who provided information on how they linked student knowledge and competencies in their daily teaching practices. The objective of the consultations was to canvas teachers' opinions because ultimately they are the ones who tangibly implement the Québec Education Program (QEP) on a day-to-day basis. Their practical perspective on the issue of the link between knowledge and competencies was therefore crucial.

OBJECTIVE OF THE CONSULTATIONS

With these consultations, the Conseil wished to gain an understanding of teaching practices—whether developed individually or in cycle teams—regarding the link between knowledge and competencies, within the framework of the QEP's implementation, and thus sought define a range of these practices.

SUB-OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERVIEWS

One of the objectives of the interviews was to explore how teachers linked knowledge and competencies throughout the pedagogical process, from planning their teaching to the communication of student results on report cards and in competency reports.

The first sub-objective was reflected in two main questions:

- How do teachers currently make the link between knowledge and competencies during the planning stage of teaching, carrying out learning situations, the evaluation of the learning, and communication to parents?

- From a teacher's perspective, how can knowledge acquired by the student be concisely and effectively conveyed to parents on a report card or in a competency report while maintaining current achievements in a competency-based approach, as promoted by the QEP and the *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary, and secondary education*?

A second sub-objective was to record the teachers' views on the availability to parents of information on the QEP. This objective was reflected in a series of questions on accessible information to parents on the objectives of the QEP and on the knowledge that a student must acquire during the course of a given cycle of instruction or academic year.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

The Conseil selected teachers for the interviews after consulting with a number of education stakeholders, including school administrators. To meet the selection criteria, the respondents had to:

- Be elementary or Secondary Cycle I teachers.
- Be relatively familiar with the Québec Education Program (QEP) and have developed teaching practices harmonized with the Program. Indeed, the objective of the consultation was to understand pedagogical practices that enable the link between knowledge and competencies. The Conseil thus needed to consult teachers who worked in a competency-based approach, as required by the QEP.

During the consultation, the Conseil also considered differences in cycles of instruction (at the elementary level) and programs (at the secondary level), as well as the region of origin. The tables below show the characteristics of the teachers interviewed.

Characteristics of Elementary School Teachers

Cycle	Number of Teachers Interviewed
Cycle I	6
Cycle II	9
Cycle III	7
Arts Program	1
Resource Teachers	1
Total	**24**

Characteristics of Secondary Cycle I Teachers

Program	Number of Teachers Interviewed
Sciences	2
French (Language of Instruction)	4
Mathematics	3
Physical Education	1
Social Sciences	1
Total	**11**

Administrative Region Of Origin
(Elementary and Secondary School Teachers)

Region	Number of Teachers Interviewed
Beauce-Etchemin	4
Chaudière-Appalaches	4
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	4
Capitale-Nationale	3
Portneuf	2
Montréal	18
Total	**35**

CONFIDENTIALITY OF PARTICIPANTS

The Conseil was committed to respecting the anonymity and confidentiality of all who participated in the consultations. Consequently, neither the names of the teachers nor their schools appear in the present Brief.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Conseil would like to thank teachers for kindly accepting to participate in the consultations. Their valuable participation enabled the Conseil to gain a better understanding of the daily practices that teachers engage their students in. The Conseil would also like to thank school administrators for assisting with the interviews and organizing the focus groups.

APPENDIX 4 EXAMPLES OF ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND PROGRAM CONTENT IN MATHEMATICS

At the elementary level, essential knowledge has links to three competencies in the subject areas:

1. To solve a situational problem related to mathematics
2. To reason using mathematical concepts and processes
3. To communicate by using mathematical language

This essential knowledge pertains to, namely:[36]

- Arithmetic
  - Understanding and writing numbers (e.g. natural numbers less than 1,000,000)
  - Meaning of operations involving numbers (e.g. choice of operation)
  - Operations involving numbers (e.g. operations to be memorized [addition 0 + 0 to 10 + 10])
- Geometry: geometric figures and spatial sense
  - Space (e.g. locating objects on an axis)
  - Solids (e.g. attributes of a prism and a pyramid)
- Measurement
  - Length: estimating and measuring (e.g. dimensions of an object)
  - Angles: estimating and measuring (e.g. comparing angles: right, acute, obtuse)
  - Masses: estimating and measuring (e.g. conventional and unconventional units)
- Statistics
  - Formulating questions for a survey
  - Interpreting data using a broken-line graph
- Probability
  - Predicting the likelihood of an event
  - Enumerating the possible outcomes of a random experiment using a table and a tree diagram
- Cultural References
  - Numbers (e.g. origin and creation of numbers)
  - Operations (e.g. technology: development [sticks, strokes, abacus, calculator, software], limitations, advantages and disadvantages)
- Symbols
  - 0 to 9, +,+ -, <, >, =
  - writing fractions
  - h, min, s (representation of time of day: 02:00, 2:00 a.m; representation of elapsed time: 2 h 10 min, 2:10)
- Vocabulary List
  - Base of a solid, less than, decimetre, difference, certain event, height, minute, natural number, edge, denominator, etc.

Guidelines for using Information and Communications Technologies are included as well.

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36 For more details or a comprehensive list, see *Québec Education Program: Preschool Education, Elementary Education*, pp.150–157.
www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/dp/programme_de_formation/primaire/educprg2001h.htm

In Secondary Cycle I, the program content for mathematics has links to three competencies in the subject areas:

1. To solve a situational problem related to mathematics
2. To reason using mathematical concepts and processes
3. To communicate by using mathematical language

This program content pertains to, namely:[37]

- Arithmetic
  - Concepts: Number sense with regard to decimal and fractional notation and operation sense
    - e.g. fractional, decimal and exponential (integral exponent) notation; percentage, square root
  - Processes: Different ways of writing and representing numbers
    - e.g. recognizing and using equivalent ways of writing numbers
- Algebra
  - Concept: Understanding algebraic expressions
    - e.g. algebraic expression – variable, coefficient, degree, terms, like terms
  - Processes:
    - e.g. constructing an algebraic expression
- Probability
  - Concept: Random experiment
  - Processes: Processing data from random experiments
- Statistics
  - Concept: Statistical reports
    - e.g. population, sample, poll, census
  - Processes: Processing data from statistical reports
    - e.g. conducting a survey or a census
- Geometry
  - Concepts: Geometric figures and spatial sense
    - e.g. triangles, quadrilaterals, and regular convex polygons
  - Processes
    - e.g. geometric constructions, geometric transformations

[37] For more detail or a comprehensive list, see *Québec Education Program: Secondary School Education, Cycle One*, pp.206–220. www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/dp/programme_de_formation/secondaire/qepsecfirstcycle.htm

APPENDIX 5 EXAMPLE OF A COMPLEX LEARNING SITUATION

Interdisciplinary Learning Activity, Elementary Cycle III

PROBLEM:
An estimated 150 million preschool children are underweight because of nutrition and/or poor health.

- *If you worked for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in a program to reduce world hunger, what steps would you take to solve this problem?*
- *How would you go about it?*
- *After reading about staple food consumption for a given country and its geographical and economic contexts, provide a solution that includes data expressed in mathematical terms.*

How much food is needed and what would the budget be?

BROAD AREA OF LEARNING:
Environment and Consumer Awareness – Awareness of global, social, economic and ethical issues.

RESOURCES USED:

Subject-specific competency: Read a variety of texts	Strategies for recognizing and identifying words in a text • Identifying new words • Finding key concept words Strategies for comprehension • Formulating hypotheses • Deducing information implied in the texts Strategies for evaluating an approach • Establishing links between the approach used and the expected outcome
Subject-specific competency: Solve a situational problem related to mathematics	Arithmetic: understanding and writing numbers • Natural numbers less than 1,000,000 • Approximation (rounding) • Fractions: percentages • Using numbers: switching from one form of writing to another Statistics • Displaying data using a bar graph, pictograph, and a data table • Interpreting data using a pie chart • Understanding and calculating the arithmetic mean
Cross-curricular competency: Utilize information and communications technologies	Using information and communications technologies • Using a calculator or computer to explore decimals, fractions and operations • Prepare a graphic presentation of the data with the help of spreadsheet software

Source: Durand and Chouinard (2006), pp.75–76. (Translation)

APPENDIX 6 COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL AND NEW EVALUATION PARADIGMS

Paradigm For Teaching	*Characteristics*	Paradigm For Learning
Evaluation is formative on a daily basis and summative at the end of each learning unit and at the end of the academic year.	Types of evaluation ⟷	Evaluation is integrated into learning throughout the cycle of instruction and used for attestation at the end of the cycle.
Tests and exams are based on acquired knowledge.	Evaluation methods ⟷	Learning situations employ developed competencies and leveraged knowledge.
Tests and exams are on a single subject, placed within an academic context with a one-dimensional product as the result. Written exams are based on multiple-choice answers or essays, often short and not fully developed.	Measurement tools ⟷	Learning situations target more than one subject and are placed in realistic contexts. The end product is multidimensional and takes the form of projects, complex tasks, attitude scales, observation checklists, self-evaluation checklists, etc. Written exams require developed answers and are included in the portfolio.
Exams and tests are scheduled for a predetermined time and duration; location is the same for all students.	Administrative conditions ⟷	Learning activities do not have a predetermined time or duration, and may vary depending on the student's learning pattern. Location may vary.
Measurement is based on the quantity of information retained and sometimes on the quantity of knowledge acquired.	Indicators of success ⟷	Measurement considers the quality of the understanding, of the competency developed, of the knowledge used, as well as the transfer of knowledge.
Interpretation is primarily based on normative and sometimes analytical benchmarks.	Interpretation of results ⟷	Interpretation is dynamic and based on analytical and global benchmarks (at the end of a cycle of instruction).
Results are indicated on the report card by subject or subject area and are shown in the form of percentages (%), with the group average and the percentile also shown. Descriptive report cards with indicators are used at the preschool and elementary levels.	Results recorded on the report card ⟷	Results are indicated by cross-curricular competencies and subject area according to a rating scale that evaluates the student in relation to his learning. Report cards are descriptive as they specify the indicators of the competencies.
Information is indicated by cumulative grades: either by stage or by objective. Grades are sometimes converted into ratings.	Strategies to define information to be included on the report card ⟷	Evaluation is ongoing and based a variety of information: processes, productions, aptitudes, etc. The teacher's professional assessment is based on evaluation benchmarks and descriptive competency scales.
The student memorizes and reproduces what he has learned by providing short or detailed answers and using his knowledge in an academic context.	Role of the student ⟷	The student solves problems by providing short or detailed answers, using his knowledge and demonstrating his competencies in a realistic context.
The teacher is interested in the quantity of information or knowledge acquired as well as the ability to use this in an academic context.	Role of the teacher ⟷	The teacher is interested in the development of competencies and their use in a realistic context.

Source: Archambault 2005–2006, Jalbert and Munn 1999 and Tardif 1999, cited in Durand and Chouinard (2006). (Translation)

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